Letter from Taizé

Bimonthly 3.50 FF 1 February - March 1999

Translated into 58 different languages (including 23 Asian ones and 7 African ones), this letter was written by Brother Roger of Taizé. It will be reflected on in Taizé, week after week, throughout the whole of 1999.

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Letter from Taizé 1999-2001 [1]

Are there realities which make life beautiful and of which it can be said that they bring a kind of fulfillment, an inner joy? Yes, there are. And one of these realities bears the name of trust.

Do we realize that what is best in each of us is built up through a simple trusting? Even a child can do it.[2]

But every age has its troubles–being abandoned by others, seeing those we love die. And for many people today the future is so uncertain that they lose courage. How then can we leave worry behind?

The source of a confident trust is in God who is love.[3] God's love is forgiveness; it is inner light.

Trust does not cause us to forget the suffering of so many unfortunate people across the earth, those who have no work or nothing to eat.[4]

These trials make us reflect: how can we be people who, sustained by a life of communion in God, take on responsibilities and search with others for ways of making the earth a better place to live in?[5]

A trust that comes from the depths does not lead us to flee responsibilities, but rather to remain present in places where human societies are in turmoil or out of joint. It

Why 1999 to 2001? We will begin the r 2000, like every year, with a meeting of ıng adults from Europe and the whole rld in a city. But we remember that nobody t wants to light fireworks as we enter the rd millennium. Such fireworks will quickly out by themselves. What will captivate us the year 2000 is the continuity of Christ in ongoing history of the human family.

If we only knew to what extent some ildren need to be looked at with trust so at they can rediscover joy at being alive. In a ild's heart, the knowledge that he or she is eply loved, and also forgiven, can be a urce of peace for an entire lifetime.

1 John 4,8. In his commentary on Saint hn's words "God is love," a Christian inker of the seventh century, Saint Isaac of ineveh, wrote, "All God can do is give his ve." That is so true: God never causes huan distress, fear or anguish. God wants neier wars nor the violence of accidents nor upavals of nature. God is innocent of all that. od is innocence.

According to the United Nations, worldide military expenditures amount to 800 to 00 billion dollars per year. It would cost only 30 billion dollars to provide a roof, clean water nd basic sanitary facilities for the one billion 00 million persons who live in utter poverty.

The vocation of our community in Taizé as always included two aspirations: to go forard in an inner life through personal prayer nd the beauty of prayer with others, and to ke on responsibilities to make the earth a etter place to live.

enables us to take risks, to keep going forward even in the face of failures.

And we are amazed to find that this trust makes us able to love with a selfless love, one which is not at all possessive.

Today, many young people across the earth are trying to heal divisions in the human family. Their confident trust can make life beautiful around them. Are they aware that, without their realizing it, a hope shines out in them?[6]

Trust and hope are rooted in a mysterious presence, the presence of Christ. Since his resurrection, Christ has been living in each of us by the Holy Spirit;[7] still more, he is "united to every human being without exception."[8]

Multitudes of human beings are unaware that Christ is united to them and they are not familiar with the way he looks at each one.[9] And yet, like someone who is humble of heart, he is present in every person. And his voice says softly, "Do you recognize the way of hope that is open for you? Are you preparing to set out on it?"[10]

Then how can we keep from saying to Christ, "I would like to follow you for my entire lifetime, but do you know how weak I am?"[11]

Through the Gospel he replies, "I am familiar with your trials and your poverty. To remain faithful your whole life long, you think you have nothing, or almost nothing. But you are filled.[12] Filled by what? By the presence of the Holy Spirit.[13] His compassion illuminates even the shadows of your soul."

Although faithfulness in following Christ calls for unwavering attentiveness, it gives in return so much joy, so much peace, so much radiance.

All who seek a communion in God let themselves be imbued with some of the most luminous words of the Gospel: "God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of inner strength, of love and of self-control."[14]

Christ knows how we must struggle to remain faithful. Tirelessly he tells us, "Surrender yourself! Entrust your fears to me!"

6 Scientific discoveries and new techno gies can be used to serve a human populati that has grown to unprecedented proportio But the future rests, more than we realize, an inner life supported by contemplation, the impetus towards reconciliation among on a life of simplicity and sharing.

7 Before leaving his disciples, Christ pro ised them that he would not leave them alon "God will send you the Holy Spirit, the Co forter, who will be with you always" (Jo 14,16). Just as Christ was present with his d ciples on earth, he continues to be prese through the Holy Spirit for us today. Thou Christ is not visible, it is the same presen And when we die, the Holy Spirit does n leave the soul that is entering eternity's li but remains with us for ever.

8 Gaudium et Spes. This intuition cou serve as the basis for pastoral work with a un versal outlook for years to come.

9 One day, when I was with my brothers Bangladesh where they share the life of t very poor, we were invited to meet with so Muslims in a slum. One of these Muslim walking back with me as the sun was settin said to me, "All human beings have the sam Master. This is a secret that has not yet bee revealed. But later on people will find out."

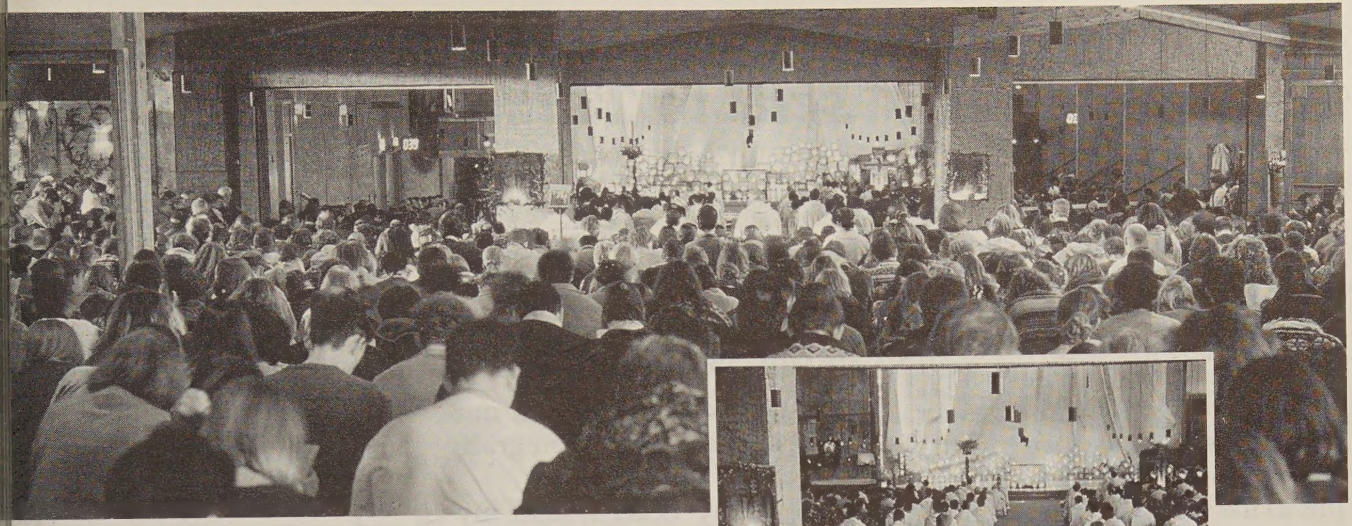
10 Why have so many young people in va regions of the world distanced themselv from trust in God? If there was not such weakening of faith, our community would n commit so much of its energies to welcom young people from across the world in Taiz week after week throughout the year. An were it not for this current breakdown of spir tual values we would not be led to go and joi young people, to search together with them In this way, beginning already in 1962, we fe called to go to Eastern European countri with great discretion, to meet young peopl to listen and try to understand. In Taizé a well as in the Southern countries, where w have been living for a long time now, we wis above all to be men who listen, never spiritua masters.

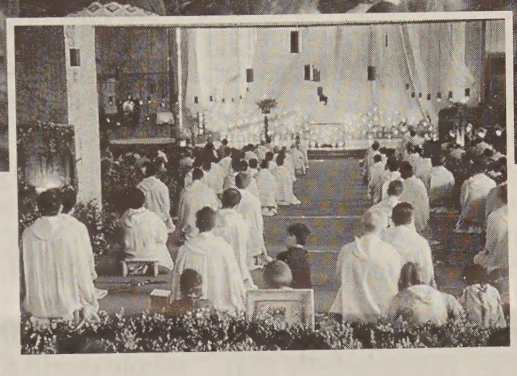
11 To place our trust in Christ, we have t open wide our hearts to him. When the hear is filled with the simple desire for a commu nion with Christ, we become aware that we al ready belong to him. "If you desire to kno God, you already have faith," wrote Saint Au gustine in the fourth century.

12 Revelation 2,9.

13 In the seventh century Saint Maximu the Confessor wrote, "The Holy Spirit is ab sent from no human being." Some peopl have learnt from Scripture that the Holy Spiri dwells within them. Others do not know it ye or will never know it on this earth, but wil discover it in eternity's life.

14 2 Timothy 1,7. Self-control and peace o heart can be so necessary, not just for ourselve but also for those around us.





Gestures of solidarity

The Taizé Community does not accept any gifts for itself; it lives entirely by its own work. By its work, the Community also takes on part of the costs of the welcome: so many young people cannot contribute to the cost of their stay, sometimes because they come from far away, whether in Europe or from other continents, sometimes because of unemployment. Moreover, for many years the Community has felt the need to give some support to the most marginalized people across the world, as at the moment in Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Bangladesh, Brazil, Central America, Russia...

We would prefer not to have to write this appeal for solidarity, but we would like these situations to be understood.

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A Bishop from Moscow in Taizé

The secret of the Russian Orthodox soul lies most particularly in a hope in the resurrection. So many Orthodox Christians, throughout history, have drawn from this a whole inner life and the energies of love. By their trust in the resurrection, they strengthen us in what is most essential in the faith. It is their attitude of faith which makes them so credible in our eyes.

On the 13th February 1998, Bishop Guri of the Moscow Patriarchate, who works at Paris, visited Taizé and said: "Between the Community of Taizé and our Church there has always been a climate of understanding, of friendship, of love. May that climate always remain! Every year, many Russian pilgrims come here, and sometimes with their priests they celebrate their liturgy in the Orthodox Chapel. But each time they have had to bring with them the antimension, which is in fact the altar. This time, I have brought the antimension that I am leaving here, in this chapel, on which Orthodox pilgrims from Russia and from other countries will be able to celebrate their liturgy. This will be a sign of a real, mystical, and visible link with worldwide Orthodoxy."

On the antimension, which is a piece of fabric containing the relic of a martyr, the Bishop wrote in Russian: "With the blessing of His Holiness Alexis II, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, Bishop Guri of Korsun, given for the liturgy in the Orthodox chapel at Taizé."

Letter from Taizé

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Messages sent to Taizé

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Brother Roger of Taizé,

On the occasion of the meeting of young people that you are organizing at Milan, the Holy Father has asked to let you know that he is glad to be with you in his thoughts and in prayer. He is especially pleased to see that the theme "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" invites everyone to abandon themselves in confidence to the love of the Father who gives life to all people, in the spirit of the last year of preparation for the great Jubilee.

With warm wishes for the success of the meeting, the Holy Father calls down the abundance of the divine blessings on you, on the Christian communities that welcome you, and on all the participants.

During one of the Young Adult European Meetings, Pope John Paul II said to us: "The Pope feels himself deeply committed with you in your pilgrimage of trust on earth.... All of you can be pilgrims of trust in the places where you live.... In order to be at the service of the faith and of unity among Christians and to be a messenger of peace in the world, I too am called to be a pilgrim of trust in the name of Christ."

PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEOS OF CONSTANTINOPLE

Christ is our friend, the friend we love most, the one who is gentle, who offers himself, who loves, who forgives, who sustains us, who regenerates us, who sets us free. So love with enthusiasm the one who loves you even to the point of death and do not look for anything else but his love. In this way the Lord will be in the midst of you and will renew you in his love (Zeph. 3,17).

Live in trust, and entrust your whole life to him. He will be worthy of your trust, and will guide you towards the joy which is beyond all understanding and which never disappears.

PATRIARCH ALEXIS II OF MOSCOW

May God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

With all my heart I send my greetings for your beautiful meeting which is bringing together thousands of young Christians from the east and west of Europe. The destiny of Europe and of the whole world depend in large part on these fraternal meetings of young people which have already become a tradition, for it will fall to you, young people, to build up and embellish the edifice of faith in Christ in the coming millennium.

The participants at the meeting belong to different denominations. But they are one in their desire to realize more fully their vocation to build up their lives in accordance with the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ, to bring the light of Christ into this world marked by the absence of faith, by intolerance, by oppositions, and by material needs, to put into practice their compassion for those who are in trouble, and to love their neighbour as themselves.

Today, at the threshold of the great Jubilee marking two thousand years since the coming into the world of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we are especially aware of the necessity of bearing witness to our faith in our daily lives, of serving reconciliation and of helping others to find the true path of salvation.

I wish you the sustaining help of God and his blessings for the success of your fraternal meeting.

THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE UNITED NATIONS, MR. KOFI ANNAN

For the twenty-first time consecutively, you are faithful your annual meeting. Beneath your different origins, cultures colours, and beliefs, you are a united by a deep respect f human diversity and by a understanding, a concern, and a unconditional love for others.

Your gathering and the faith which inspires it are unique. A a time when marginalization, u certainty, and indifference a spreading their pernicious effect to the four corners of the plane your demonstration is a breath of hope for the future of humanity.

The enthusiasm of your commitment and the sincerity of you convictions are a source of inspiration for all those at the United Nations Organization who ar trying to build up a better world I thank you and wish you grea success.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, DR. GEORGE CAREY

Dear Brother Roger

I am delighted to greet you and the participants of the twenty-firs Young Adult European Meeting from 28 December 1998 — 1 January 1999 in Milan.

Be much assured of my prayers and best wishes as you spend time together in prayers, fellowship and group work. I hope you will leave refreshed by God's word and inspired to be more effective witnesses for Christ to the world around you.

May our Lord, through you, bless the Christian churches in Europe and prepare for us a Millennium of reconciliation and peace.

With much love in Jesus Christ.

MEDITATING ON THE WORD
MARCH

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

Ep 3:14-19
1 Mon May Christ dwell in your hearts through faith, and may you be rooted and established in love, so that knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Lk 6:17-23
2 Tue Jesus said: Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Mt 7:12
3 Wed Jesus said: Do to others as you would like them to do to you.

1 K 19:1-8
4 Thu When Elijah was discouraged, an angel of God touched him and said, "Get up and eat, or the journey will be too long for you." So he got up and ate and drank, and, strengthened by that food, he walked until he reached the mountain of God.

1 Co 10:12-13
5 Fri God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength. But when you are tempted, God will give you the means to stand up to it and will show you a way forward.

Mt 14:22-33
6 Sat Jesus came towards his disciples, walking on the water, and they were terrified; but at once he said to them: Courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.

Jn 5:24-27
7 SUN Jesus said: Whoever listens to my words and believes in the one who sent me has passed from death to life.

Mt 6:19-21
8 Mon Jesus said: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For wherever your treasure is, there will your heart be too.

1 Th 5:12-22
9 Tue See that people do not pay back evil for evil, but always seek what is good, both among yourselves and for others.

Ps 51
10 Wed Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

2 Tm 1:6-11
11 Thu Paul writes to Timothy: Share in my sufferings for the Gospel, relying on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy.

Lk 6:27-35
12 Fri Jesus said: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Ph 2:1-11
13 Sat Paul writes: Be one in love, one in heart and one in mind; do nothing out of jealousy or vanity.

Jn 9:1-41
14 SUN Jesus said to his disciples: We must do the work of the one who sent me, while the daylight lasts. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

Lk 5:29-32
15 Mon Jesus said: It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have come to call not the righteous but sinners to repentance.

Jm 5:7-11
16 Tue James writes: Be patient; do not lose heart, for the Lord's coming will be soon.

Rm 13:11-14
17 Wed Paul writes: Let us put aside the deeds of darkness. Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lk 9:46-48
18 Thu Jesus said: Anyone who welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me; and anyone who welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.

Mt 1:16-21
19 Fri St JOSEPH
An angel said to Joseph: Mary will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.

Rm 11:29,33-36
20 Sat Paul writes: God never revokes his gifts or his call.

Jn 11:1-45
21 SUN Jesus said: I am the resurrection. Whoever believes in me shall live, even though they die. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die.

Si 4:1-10
22 Mon Deliver the oppressed from the hands of the oppressor and you will be like a child of the Most High who will love you more than your own mother does.

Mk 10:42-45
23 Tue Jesus said to his disciples: You know that in the world rulers lord it over their subjects and make their power felt. This is not to happen among you. No, anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant.

Is 40:25-28
24 Wed The Lord says: Why do you complain, my people, saying, "My way is hidden from the Lord, my cause is disregarded by God"? Do you not know? The Lord is the everlasting God, the creator of the world, who does not tire or grow weary.

Lk 1:26-38
25 Thu The angel said to Mary: Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God. You will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.

1 Tm 4:12-16
26 Fri Paul writes to Timothy: You have in you a spiritual gift which was given to you. Do not neglect it.

Mt 19:27-29
27 Sat Jesus said: Anyone who leaves everything for my sake will receive much more and will inherit eternal life.

Mt 21:1-11
28 SUN PALM SUNDAY
See, your king is approaching, humble and riding on a donkey and on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.

Mt 26:36-46
29 Mon Jesus prayed: My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Yet not as I will, but as you will.

Mt 27:45-46
30 Tue Upon the cross, Jesus cried out in a loud voice: My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Lk 23:33-46
31 Wed The criminal crucified next to Jesus, said to him, "Remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "In truth I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

JOHANNINE HOURS

LUKE 9,43-48

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

One day when everybody is admiring and praising him, Jesus calls his disciples to speak to them about what he himself feels. As can happen when someone tries to communicate what is in their heart of hearts, even those closest to him do not comprehend his words: "The Son of man is going to be handed over into the hands of men."

The rest of the Gospel helps us understand this better. "The Son of man" is the way Jesus prefers to refer to himself. It has a double meaning. By alluding to the Book of Daniel (7,13-14), it evokes the glory of the Messiah. But Jesus seems to like it as well because it emphasizes that he is a human being like others. He is fully human, even to the point of being handed over to the good (or bad) will of others. His words could be paraphrased in this way: "My fellow human beings will do with me what they want."

His disciples must have understood something of this. But they were frightened at the thought that Jesus, whom they admired, could be treated like the least of all. They are thinking in terms of honor and glory, and so they ask themselves the question: "Who can be the greatest among us?" Jesus realizes this, and he understands. It is perhaps their desire to be like their Master that causes them to want to be great.

Jesus notices that a child is present. He takes the child and places it beside him. In this child he recognizes himself. Like him, the child is at the mercy of others. People can do what they want with a little child. And children keep on trusting. That child came when Jesus called. Of all those who are present, that child is the one most similar to Jesus.

- In whom can we recognize and welcome Christ today?
- Why does Jesus, thinking of the difficult events that lie on the horizon, see himself above all in a child?

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

APRIL

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

Lk 23:33-34
1 Thu On the cross, Jesus said: Father, forgive them; they do not know what they are doing.

Lk 23:33-46
2 Fri GOOD FRIDAY
On the cross, Jesus said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last.

Jn 12:20-30
3 Sat Jesus said: In truth, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains only a single grain. But if it dies, it yields a big harvest.

Mt 28:1-10
4 SUN EASTER DAY
At the grave, the angel said to the women: Do not be afraid. I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.

Ac 1:6-11
5 Mon Jesus, risen from the dead, said to his disciples: You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Ac 5:17-33
6 Tue God has raised Jesus from the dead to make him Saviour, and through him to change our hearts and grant forgiveness of sins.

Ac 26:1-23
7 Wed Paul said: I have borne witness to great and small alike, saying that the Christ was to suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he was to proclaim light for all nations.

Rm 8:1-11
8 Thu The One who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

Heb 10:22-25
9 Fri Let us hold to the hope we profess, without wavering, for God who has promised is faithful.

Zc 2:14
10 Sat Sing and rejoice, my people, for I am coming to live among you, says the Lord.

Jn 20:24-29
11 SUN Jesus said to Thomas: You believe because you can see me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

Col 3:1-4
12 Mon You have been raised with Christ, so set your hearts on things above. For you have died and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God.

Ps 119:25-32
13 Tue I run in the path of your will, O God, for you have set my heart free.

Ph 4:4-7
14 Wed Do not let anything worry you, but in every situation, by prayer with thanksgiving, let God know your desires.

Dt 4:29-31
15 Thu You will seek the Lord your God; you will find the Lord if you search for him with all your heart and all your soul.

Ac 15:5-12
16 Fri Peter said: God chose me so that the nations might hear from my lips the message of the Good News and believe. God makes no distinction between human beings.

Ph 2:1-11
17 Sat Being in every way like a human being, Christ Jesus was humbler yet, and became obedient to death, death on a cross. Therefore God raised him high and gave him the name which is above all other names.

Lk 24:13-35
18 SUN Having recognised the Risen Christ, the disciples of Emmaus said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

Zc 8:16-19
19 Mon The Lord says to his people: Within your gates render judgments that are true and make for peace. Yes, love truth and peace.

Ps 10:14-18
20 Tue You hear the desire of the humble, Lord; you encourage them and listen to their cry.

2 Co 8:1-4
21 Wed Paul wrote of the first Christian communities: Throughout ordeals of hardship, their unfailing joy and extreme poverty overflowed in rich generosity.

Ep 1:3-10
22 Thu God has let us know the mystery of his good purpose: to bring all things together under Christ as head.

Jn 10:11-18
23 Fri Jesus said: I am the good shepherd. My sheep will listen to my voice and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Ph 3:7-14
24 Sat Paul writes: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Jn 10:1-10
25 SUN Jesus said: I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

2 Co 3:4-6
26 Mon God has made us able to serve a new covenant, one which is not of written letters but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

2 Co 3:16-18
27 Tue Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

Gn 12:1-5
28 Wed The Lord said to Abraham, "Leave your country, your kinsfolk and your father's house for the land I will show you." And Abraham set out, as the Lord had told him.

Jn 15:9-13
29 Thu Jesus said: This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you.

Col 1:9-14
30 Fri God has rescued us from the rule of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have forgiveness.

JOHANNINE HOURS

MATTHEW 11,25-30

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 5 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

In this text, Jesus allows us to glimpse his relationship with the Father. In the midst of the incomprehensions he suffers, he discerns the Father's loving will to communicate his identity in a way that overturns all human logic. Those who are well placed to enter into the mystery of God are not people who vaunt their own powers but rather the "little ones," in other words those who are not (yet) able to take charge of their own life by themselves (cf.Gal 4,1).

The explanation of this paradoxical situation is that God is communion, a shared life. In God's existence, there is no room for possession: everything is an incessant welcoming and giving. As the Son, Christ receives everything from the Father in order to give it back to him immediately: being, self-knowledge, a life-plan... If, for our part, we are too attached to what we have acquired, that makes it hard for us to place our trust in Someone else, to grasp the mystery of communion.

In fact, no human being can live spontaneously an utter poverty like God's. The miracle of faith is that by sending his Son, God invites us to enter into the divine communion. And Jesus describes this as a rest. When we try to please God or help others by our own efforts, sooner or later we reach the limit of our possibilities. By taking upon ourselves the yoke of the Son, in other words by following him until we become "lowly and humble of heart," we receive everything from the Father and can benefit from inexhaustible energies.

- What other Bible texts express the reversal of values caused by the coming of Christ?
- What in my life risks being an obstacle to communion with God? How can I turn it into a gift?
- How can I take upon myself the yoke of Christ? What does the "resting" of faith mean for me?

He draws us out of our isolation and allows us to find support in that mystery of a communion of love which is called the Church.

We would always like to remember that Christ is above all communion. He did not come to earth to start a new religion but to foster a communion of love in God.

And the more the Church welcomes[15] with simplicity,[16] the closer it is to our fragile hearts. Without many words, and even in silence, we are then led to live Christ for others.

If it were possible to fathom a human heart, what would we find there? We would be surprised to discover that in the depths of the human condition there is the longing for a presence, the silent desire for communion.

Filled with this longing, some people say, "I would like to open myself up to God just as I am, but I get distracted when I pray and my heart becomes scattered."[17] The Gospel replies, "God is greater than your heart."[18]

Though we may well have the impression that we are praying with almost nothing,[19] is not God a Father who welcomes everyone with tender love? [20] Christ's last prayer on earth reminds us of this: "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit."[21]

Prayer alone can be tedious at times[22], but we should not forget that there is the beauty of prayer with others. Expressed in simple words, through hymns and songs, it succeeds in touching the very depths of the soul.[23]

Whoever walks in Christ's footsteps remains at one and the same time close to God and close to others. Prayer is a serene force at work within human beings, unsettling them, not letting them fall asleep in the face of evil, of the hardships that so many people are undergoing. Indispensable energies of compassion are drawn from prayer. [24]

For those who want to surrender themselves to Christ with steadfast hearts and give him their entire lives, there is a choice to be made, a decision to take. What decision? To let an unbounded gratefulness to God well up in us.

This gratefulness is a basic attitude. It is a peaceful joy

Among many gestures of welcome, there blessed bread. One day, Christ blessed five ves and shared them among all without dis- ction (see Matthew 14,13-21). From that g-ago event the following gesture arose: ing blessed bread to all those who are pres- at the Eucharistic celebration, including se who cannot receive the Eucharist.

If simplicity of life became a synonym for sterity, how would it open us up to the Gos- ? The spirit of simplicity shines forth in ns of serene joy and also in cheerfulness of art. Simplifying invites us to arrange the lit- we have in the simple beauty of creation. one should worry that they do not have a to share: very little faith, so few posses- ns. In the sharing of that little, God offers a art filled to overflowing that will never run y.

One question keeps coming up: why do have to address explicit prayers to God en he knows everything about us? Christ eds light on this mystery: he himself used rds to pray, even though God knew the in- tion of his heart.

1 John 3,20.

Some Eastern Christians recite the prayer the Name of Jesus their whole life long, oud or not, to the rhythm of their breathing. repeat over and over the simple name "Je- s" expresses the fullness of a communion.

One of the most beautiful expressions of od's tender love is found in the parable of e prodigal son (see Luke 15,11-32).

Some people say these words of Jesus, ather, into your hands I commit my spirit" uke 23,46), every night before they go to ep.

If we experience a kind of void in our ayer, we can let God speak in us. We should member these words written by Saint Au- stine in the fourth century: "There is a voice the heart and a language of the heart... That ner voice is our prayer when our lips are osed and our soul open before God. We re- ain silent and our heart speaks, not to hu- an ears but to God. Be sure that God will ar you."

In our homes, we can arrange in a beauti- l way the corner of a room for prayer, no atter how small it may be, with an icon, a ndle. And some people play a cassette if they nnot sing themselves.

Why would someone who is ill or elderly orry and say, "I am not doing anything for thers"? Could they have forgotten that their ayer is heard by God and will be answered a way they could have never imagined?

The Holy Spirit sustains in us a joy that sus also experienced on earth: "Jesus was led with joy through the Holy Spirit" (Luke 0,21).

To go forward in trust in God and build neself up inwardly, it is good to pray in the lence of one's heart with just a few words nd to come back to them constantly. For ex- mple: "In all things peace of heart... joy, sim- licity, mercy"; "Jesus, my joy, my hope and y life"; or else: "God, you love us, your for-

always reawakened in us by the Holy Spirit.[25] It is the spirit of praise. It attempts to view others and their aspirations with hopefulness.

God wants us to be happy. It is up to us to detect the Gospel realities that make life beautiful: trust, the spirit of praise, an overflowing heart, a joy renewed at every moment...[26]

In the New Testament, the apostle Peter assures us: "You love Christ although you have never seen him, and you believe in him though you still do not see him, so you are filled with a joy too deep for words that is already transfiguring you."[27]

And when fogs of hesitation arise, we are surprised to find ourselves saying, "We love you, Christ, perhaps not as we would like to, but we do love you. And what is most transparent in our lives is built up by a humble trusting in you."

In the fourth century, Saint Ambrose of Milan wrote, "Begin the work of peace within yourself so that, once you are at peace yourself, you can bring peace to others."[28]

Peace of heart is like a new birth in the depths of each person's being.[29] Anyone who seeks this peace cannot help but be attentive to the words of Christ: "Go first and be reconciled."[30] "Go first!" Not: "Put it off till later!"[31]

To communicate Christ, is there a reality more crystal-clear than a life where reconciliation is made concrete day after day?[32] Being reconciled means loving, forgiving... and expressing it by one's life. It also means keeping alert so as to live in compassion and kind-heartedness.[33]

Love, and say it by your life![34]

Without love, without forgiveness, is there a future for anyone? Without reconciliation, what future is there for peace on earth?

Without joy and simplicity, those Gospel realities so closely linked to one another, how can we radiate a spirit of forgiveness, not just among believers but towards non-believers as well?

And so, "abandoning all worry, be constantly joyful in Christ! Yes, find your joy in him!"[35]

giveness and your presence bring to birth i
us the brightness of praise"; or else: "Jesu
your light is shining within us, let not m
doubts and my darkness speak to me, let m
heart always welcome your love."

27 1 Peter 1,8. This New Testament text ha
been read for two thousand years. By th
Holy Spirit, Christ comes to us and pene
trates even the contradictory forces ove
which the will has little control. He places i
us a reflection of his face, "transfiguring
what worries us about ourselves. It is up to u
to abandon ourselves to Christ, "until the da
dawns and the morning sun rises in ou
hearts" (2 Peter 1,19). And an imperceptibl
inner change, a "transfiguration" of our be
ing, continues at every stage in life.

28 A Russian Orthodox saint of the earl
nineteenth century, Saint Seraphim of Saro
wrote, "Acquire inner peace and thousand
around you will find salvation."

29 The apostle Paul invites us: "May th
peace of God, which is beyond all under
standing, keep your hearts and your minds i
Christ Jesus!" (Philippians 4,7).

30 Matthew 5,24.

31 And if we missed the hour of reconcilia
tions? Without reconciliation, what future i
there for that unique communion of lov
which is called the Church?
The vocation to work for the reconciliation o
separated Christians is called ecumenism. Al
though the ecumenical vocation has led to re
markable dialogues and sharing, how can w
forget the words of Christ: "Go first and b
reconciled"? Ecumenism comes to a standstil
when it leads to the creation of parallel road
which by definition cannot meet and on
which the living forces of the call to reconcili
ation wear themselves out. It is like train
travelling on parallel tracks: now and ther
they stop to allow a meeting, then each per
son gets back on their own train.
When we keep putting off the reconciliation
of Christians till later, ecumenism could
nourish illusory hopes without realizing it
And who would dare to lead the younger gen
erations towards an illusion? When the ecu
menical vocation does not result in concret
acts of reconciliation, it leads nowhere and
the flame goes out.

32 Nothing lasts longer than the memory o
past hurts. This memory even manages to b
transmitted from one generation to another
Forgiveness and reconciliation, however, en
able us to go beyond the memory.

33 It is so clear that each of us is faced with
the most audacious adventure of reconcilia
tion possible. When we are reconciled, littl
by little our hearts change. And the Gospe
calls us to pray as well for those who hurt u
(see Matthew 5,44).

34 According to Saint Augustine, fourth
century.

35 Philippians 4,4.